

The LENINIST

No to the poll tax, no to the roof tax! Fight Thatcher and Kinnock!

WE DO not need to tell readers of this paper how bad the poll tax is. All partisans of the working class know that it was designed to shift the burden of local government expenditure away from true blue Tory voters and on to the backs of the working class. Under its lash the Tories reckon that 'high spending' Labour councils will be unelectable because their poll tax charges would be unaffordable, that the crumbling and inadequate local services, which they consider little more than wasteful sops, will therefore be cut to the bone. In other words the poll tax is a frontal attack on the entire working class. Unfortunately the existing leadership of the working class movement has not proved to be up to the challenge, indeed its role is that of a fifth column.

The Socialist Workers Party and in particular *Militant* – in reality a safe reformist organisation which proudly proclaims that it "supports laws against crime" – have been the butt of a vicious lying bourgeois press campaign claiming they've organised "bully boy" violence. Given that, one would have thought it would be automatic for all democrats, let alone socialists, to defend them.

Not Kinnock though. He actually rounded on them using phrases directly borrowed from the *Sun*. What a low life scum! According to this pompous prig those who have tirelessly demonstrated and fought against the poll tax are nothing but a "raggle taggle army of toytown Trots", "toytown revolutionaries", who are ruining his chances of power.

He has plenty of so-called 'communist' friends. As well as the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain there is the Euro 'official' CPGB. Showing the direction of its political evolution and its true colours in the festering shape of Mark Perryman, it lines up with Kinnock ... and, more importantly (not least for them), the boss class media. Perryman penned a poisonous, and frankly proto-fascistic half page article in the Euros' *7 Days*, in which he blamed the SWP for all the violence! Not once did he expose the press lies and police provocation, let alone advocate workers' self defence (Perryman – who incidentally studied war at Sandhurst – is opposed to all working class violence on "principle").

From the same 'official communist' camp, the New Communist Party – which wants 'communist unity' with Benito Perryman – also echoes Kinnock. This sponging diplomatic-internationalist fringe organisation hypocritically attacks the Trotskyites, who at the moment stand at the forefront of the anti-poll tax fight, as shouting "slogans from the fringes ... their one tactic sloganising – don't col-

Militant is a safe reformist organisation that "supports laws against crime". What workers need is a Communist Party committed to violent revolution

lect, don't pay – sounds radical, but does nothing to help mobilise the hundreds of thousands who are confused and intimidated by the poll tax as well as being angered." (*New Worker*, March 16 1990). What rubbish!

To leave no room for doubt concerning its respectability, this 'sound' centrist Derby and Joan retirement home not only urges on Kinnock's purge of *Militant*, but it also supports his roof tax: "To win," it says, we need "an alternative to the Tories' policies." The roof tax might "not be ideal" but "it is the simplest, practical short term response" ... as if it was our job to tell the bourgeois state how to tax us. It is not! It's their state; let them pay for the lot! Not a working class pound, not a working-class penny in taxation for the bourgeois state!

Stabbing in the back the million or so people in Scotland alone who have refused to pay, Kinnock has called the tactic of non-payment "luxurious self indulgence". But again he is far from alone. An increasing number of left Labour MPs seem to agree; Dennis Skinner, Diane Abbott and Brian Sedgemore all say they won't refuse to pay. While their cowardice is to be expected, surely we should expect more from the SWP.

It will come as a surprise to those who fall for the lies of the bourgeois media, though not our readership, that the SWP was peddling Kinnockism in Scotland two years ago. Then it declared that a campaign based on non-payment was "virtually impossible". And apparently in spite of a line change since (or at least, a change of slogan on their posters), many of its members are determined to be good citizens like Kinnock and pay up their poll tax. *Militant* quotes a leading 'Kinnockite' SWP member, Simon Speed, from Bedford, as saying that the non-payment campaign was "duping people"

Militant/RSL has the virtue of taking the poll tax seriously and recognising its potential to mobilise the working class. Not so the 'Revolutionary' 'Communist' 'Party'. For the RCP "the political potential of the poll tax issue is limited". Protests against it are dismissed as merely coming from "rebel Tory councillors".

The whole campaign is apparently "much more a middle class revolt against the burden of local taxation than a protest against the anti-democratic character of the poll tax". Because of this the RCP, which perfected its boycott over Ireland, prefers "to devote" its "campaigning ener-

gies" to issues "which have more potential for clarifying and strengthening working class politics", ie, have more potential for gaining recruits for the RCP (*the next step*, March 16 1990). This is monstrous for an organisation which glorifies itself with the title of 'party'.

To dismiss the tens and hundreds of thousands who have taken to the streets and the millions who will refuse to pay, the RCP needs a 'theoretical' justification. "The poll tax," it says, "like other taxes is ultimately a deduction from the surplus value appropriated by capitalists". Workers will simply make up for it by pushing for higher wages, but the hard pressed small capitalists will have to pay out of their meagre profits. In other words, for the RCP the poll tax is an attack on small capitalists, not the working class. This is a self serving lie. The RCP has made no impact within the anti-poll tax unions; therefore, as with the Miners Support Groups of 1984-5, it boycotts them.

Unlike the RCP, the rest of the left press is full of anti-poll tax articles. But as well as being full of explanations of how unfair it all is there is a certain hope. Mixed with fire and fury condemnations there is a tentative optimism, that, yes, after a decade of victories over our class – from the steelworkers to the P&O seafarers – the poll tax could prove to be Thatcher's Waterloo.

In our view this is not simply another example of journalistic wishful thinking. Conditions are ripe for attack, the masses are angry and the Thatcher government is vulnerable.

There is no doubt that the Thatcher government, with its economic policy muddle, chaotic student loans scheme and Dickensian NHS reforms, besides its hated poll tax, is deeply unpopular – and in deep trouble. Ministerial rats are one by one deserting her ship, Tory councillors are resigning en masse and in opinion poll after opinion poll Labour is given a 20% lead.

Certainly among the Tory voting middle classes and the upper section of the working class there is an increasing feeling that their prosperity is under threat, that the sacrifices and social strains of the Thatcher years were all for nothing. The return of stagflation, mortgage rate hikes and the giant trade deficit – £20.9 billion last year – are the sickening evidence that there has been no British economic renaissance, only a continuation of relative decline. Ma-

Counterrevolution p2

Hands Off Ireland! p3

Internationalism pp4-5

South Africa and Ireland p8

the fluidity and volatility of British politics. But before, during and after any general election, what is crucial for us is the organised strength of the working class, its leadership and potential to make revolution. We do not put our faith in the Labour Party; it is a bourgeois party of the working class (Lenin) which can never carry out "socialist policies in the interests of the working class," as *Militant* would have us believe.

Whoever wins the next general election, Labour, Tory or Liberal Democrat, will attack our class; the logic of running capitalism demands it, just as it did when Labour was last in government (Callaghan succeeded in driving down real wages to an extent not seen before during this century). And as we all know, Kinnock has promised to run capitalism. He will, if he is given the opportunity, and to prove it Labour has already produced its own version of the poll tax: the roof tax. That means we will have to fight whoever wins! We must do our utmost to ensure that if Thatcher and Thatcherism go they are not simply replaced by Kinnock and Thatchnockism.

With the widespread discontent over the poll tax finding expression on the streets, outside the hallowed institutions of public house and the houses of parliament, a brief window of opportunity has opened. It must not be wasted. If the working class is to make real gains it is essential that the fight against the poll tax is organised along revolutionary lines. That means the domination of *Militant* reformism over the anti-poll tax movement – earned, we are only too willing to admit, through admirable doggedness and determination – must be broken, that we fight using the best tactics and strategy available, ie the tactics and strategy of Marxism-Leninism defended and advanced by the Communist Party of Great Britain (*The Leninist*).

Thatcher and Co must go via the class war, via mass action of the working class organised along class lines, not via an atomised electorate and a "general election now", which *Militant* calls for.

- Mass non-payment must be linked to mass industrial action to prevent its collection, whether through the local authorities, DSS or employers.

- Transform Anti-Poll Tax Unions into Councils of Action through basing them on elected, recallable delegates from all working class organisations. Form a National Council of Action.

- Counter police and bailiff violence with APTU Workers' Defence Corps.

- Break the Tories anti-trade union laws and the Tory government, for an indefinite general strike against the poll tax.

Jack Conrad



LAST year's landslide for Solidarnosc in Poland and this month's election of equally counterrevolutionary parties in Hungary and the GDR puts yet more flesh onto our theory of peaceful, democratic counterrevolution. It is obvious to those who are not wilfully blind that in these countries capitalism is being restored with the consent of the broad mass of the population and that for the full blown reintroduction of capitalism there exists no necessity for violently smashing the existing state.

However, there are bound to be dogmatists. As well as silly Trotskyites, a number of friends have accused us of being confused or even reformist! In general the argument runs as follows: the capitalist state has to be violently smashed in order to establish socialism. Hence, for a reversal to take place the same *must* apply.

This is not true. Therefore it is not a tenet of Marxism. Marxism is not a dogma, providing universal truths. It is a method which revolutionaries are able to use to guide their practice. The world is far more complex and rich than dogmatists care to imagine. There is nothing mechanical or fixed about it. That is why we do not take ready made formulas as our starting point, rather the world as it is.

Marx, Engels and Lenin took exactly the same approach. For example in certain, definite circumstances they considered a peaceful socialist revolution possible. Marx and Engels cited America and Britain, because in these two countries until the last quarter of the nineteenth century the capitalist military-bureaucratic state, if not non-existent, was extremely weak. Lenin too spoke of a peaceful transition in Russia in the immediate aftermath of the February Revolution.

What Marxism demands is concrete analysis of concrete situations. That is exactly what we have done with developments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Of course, it is impossible to present any sort of proper argument in the space available here. Nonetheless, at the risk of oversimplification let us make two crucial points.

1. Socialism is a *transitional* society between capitalism and communism "which must combine the features of both" (Lenin). In essence socialism is monopoly capitalism without the capitalists and a bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie. Therefore socialism is not a distinct socio-economic formation, a distinct mode of production.

2. There is nothing automatic about the transition to communism. What is primary is not state property but correct communist leadership and mass proletarian democracy which allows full scope to the development of the productive forces.

Socialism emerged in countries which were in general backward; the result was that its bourgeois features were very strong. In fact, because of 'official communist' leadership the socialist state was not the servant of society, but remained its master. Hence the unity between the working class and the state was purely formal. *Living socialism* was in reality *bureaucratic socialism*.

The narrow, conservative, sectional interests of the bureaucracy meant that these masters of society eventually went from being a relative to an absolute fetter on the development of the productive forces. When this happened the resulting crisis in bureaucratic socialism saw both top sections of the state machine and an alienated population, including the working class, propelled into the arms of democratic counterrevolution.

There was nothing *inevitable* – ie, historically progressive – about this. A political revolution was needed, but the subjective factor lagged far, far behind. The forces of communism lacked any sort of genuine communist programme. In the absence of any sort of serious opposition, the socialist states have become bourgeoisified. This might confound dogmatists, but not us. We live and organise to fight another day.

The Editor

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LETTERS

Open Letter

Like all other organisations claiming to be revolutionary, the CPGB(TL) has been put to the test by the events in Eastern Europe. In our view your analysis of these events is wholly wrong...

Your starting point is that what is taking place is, purely and simply, a counterrevolution. The only possible outcome is the restoration of capitalism. Indeed you suggest that this has already taken place in Poland.

Comrades, your analysis is riddled with errors. You are guilty of believing that a revolution can only take place when it is 'communist led'. This is not the case. As Lenin said on many occasions, those who hanker after only pure revolutions will wait a long time. There have been revolutions, with varying degrees of violence, throughout eastern Europe. What else can you call the Romanian civil war, if not a revolution against Ceausescu? Do these revolutions open up the possibility of counterrevolution, of capitalist restoration? Yes, but nowhere has this counterrevolution been successfully carried through yet...

While we disagree with your analysis of the current situation we do take note that you are preparing yourselves for a radical reorientation as a result of it. You emphasise in your press the need to steel your cadres, train them as communists and raise their cultural level. To that end you are organising ... an international school in which, you say, "there will be no pulling ideological punches", with tendencies invited that you disagree with.

You are right to stress the centrality of ideological rearmament. You would be wrong to deprive your organisation of a debate with our international Trotskyist tendency that has, in the current period, advanced a detailed programme for the world situation, *The Trotskyist Manifesto*. We have debated with you on a number of occasions. We wrote you (some years ago) a long letter explaining the key questions that need to be debated between Trotskyists and yourselves. You declined to reply. Now we call on you to invite us to your school to engage you in debate on the relevance of our programme against all those of our rival tendencies.

... We have produced much on the crisis in Eastern Europe, and it is unique in its revolutionary content. This is because we are guided by a programme of revolutionary Marxism. If you are serious about re-arming yourselves you cannot avoid confronting our ideas in a far more systematic way than you have hitherto done. After all, we are the Trotskyist tendency that you have engaged in practical collaboration with on a number of issues.

For too long you have avoided a confrontation with our ideas. At our debate in London on Afghanistan most of your members arrived late. At our public event, Permanent Revolution '89 you decided against participation from the floor in the debates on Eastern Europe. If you are serious about facing the future as revolutionaries this cannot go on. On the other hand if you do invite us to your school and debate us, with no punches pulled, you will find that the event will be enriched by the voice of authentic Trotskyism.

Workers Power

Alan Merrick replies:
Our readers will know full well that we do not consider the "only possible outcome" of develop-

ments in Eastern Europe to be counterrevolution: we call for a revolution in these countries which to the extent that capitalism is restored takes on social as well as political tasks. As to "pure revolutions", this is rich! Workers Power calls the Afghan revolution a military coup and the post World War II revolutions in Eastern Europe, the Chinese, Vietnamese and Cuban revolutions, etc, "counterrevolutionary social overturns led by counterrevolutionaries"! Of course, when authentic counterrevolutionaries appear on the scene, like Walesa in Poland or the National Salvation Front in Romania, what do we see? Workers Power cheers on a 'political revolution'. Take a long hard look at your 'political revolutions': not least the GDR, Poland, Romania and Hungary. They have not (to use your escape clause) 'opened up the possibility of counterrevolution', they have implemented it.

We did not reply to WP's rambling 1985 'open letter' – which it saw fit not to make open – because it did little more than regurgitate 1930s Trotsky. Having read this all before, we saw no good reason to take time on a fifty year old repeat. (We have cut their latest open letter – but we have made the complete version available to our members and sympathisers; we presume this time that WP will actually engage in open polemic and print it in their own press, along with our reply). As to our "deciding against participation in Permanent Revolution '89", we were originally invited to speak from the platform. We accepted: the invitation was withdrawn. Obviously, WP were not so keen on a confrontation of ideas with us on this occasion.

Lastly, "practical collaboration". All readers need to do is to look at page three of this issue of *The Leninist* to see what you mean by it. Workers Power actually refuses to even lend moral support to the April 21 Hands Off Ireland! demonstration calling for troops out now.

Given this, its insistence on calling revolutions counterrevolutions and counterrevolutions revolutions, the silly carping and dishonest attacks on us, etc, we see no point whatsoever in inviting this group to our school. If on the other hand Workers Power wish to debate the questions raised in its open letter in front of its membership, then let them do so.

Similar Problems

Both Millenin and Mitchell Barrett's letters (*The Leninist* No88)

suffer from similar problems. Both fail to understand the nature of socialism as a transitional form of society. Thus, when Mitchell asks: "Is a social system primarily determined by its economic base (ie, its mode of production) or is it primarily determined by its political and ideological superstructure?", he jumps ahead of himself. The question that goes before that in the case of socialism is – precisely what is a 'socialist mode of production'? Surely we must say that socialism is characterised by the struggle between the two laws which correspond to the 'finished' social systems that lie at either end of this period of transition – the law of value springing out of capitalism and conscious planning representing communism.

Millenin says that "the army, po-

lice etc are defenders of the workers' state and cannot simply be utilised by the bourgeoisie without smashing the state apparatus." But comrade, in these countries we are seeing sections of the state bureaucracies themselves – for the communist parties of the socialist world degenerated into parties of the working class bureaucracy – becoming the new bourgeoisies. Given the totally formal nature of the socialism of these countries, the complete divorce of the proletariat from the task of running the state and their effective alienation from it, why on earth is the proto bourgeoisie faced with the task of smashing a state over which they now have control?

Mark Fischer
London

Irish Support

We wish to emphasise our position as regards the Hands Off Ireland! Easter march and rally in London. When the idea was first made public to ourselves and others, we expressed reservations about the effectiveness of holding yet another march on Ireland, especially given the small array of forces which actively supported HOI!. In our opinion there are a variety of other little explored avenues to which the effort and energy being given to this Easter event could have been directed.

However, now that the event is going ahead we feel that it must be supported. Any action taken in the oppressor country which raises the Irish question cannot be bypassed or boycotted. By the same token, the IRSP will not spurn any invitation to put forward our political analysis and revolutionary socialist perspective.

We would therefore urge that the march and rally be supported in the fullest sense, since an abject failure would be detrimental to the Irish struggle as a whole.

Eamon Mullan
Irish Republican Socialist Party

Greetings

The decision by the Leninists of the CPGB at their Fourth Conference to form a distinct, revolutionary wing of the CPGB is a development which must be welcomed by all genuine communists. At a time when the crisis of the 'official communist' movement in Britain is reaching a decisive stage it is the self evident duty of all who call themselves Marxist-Leninists to abandon their illusions and rally round the banner of the CPGB (TL).

The Leninists of the CPGB are the only force ideologically fitted to save the Party and to undertake the enormous task of rebuilding it into a revolutionary party which can worthily claim to be the heir of the 1920 CPGB.

MG Malkin
Surrey

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

WRITE OR RING

If you would like to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist* please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Or phone us on 01-431 3135.

Ireland needs united action, not pathetic excuses

When faced with an action organised on a principled platform it is the duty of all genuine revolutionary organisations to lend support, even if this is only moral support. When put on the spot, Red Action and Workers Power refuse this

HANDS OFF IRELAND! has won a wide range of sponsors for its demonstration on Saturday April 21 – republican prisoners, trade union branches, the Irish Freedom Movement, *Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism*, South London Troops Out Movement are just a few of those who have united in backing it. However we have received letters from two very different groups – Red Action and the Labour Party's own Workers Power – which have a common sectarian message: no support, not even moral support.

While we feel duty bound to reply, readers will forgive us if we do not reprint the letters; space is tight. Our close supporters and sympathisers have been circulated with copies of both letters, and they are available to readers, together with more extensive replies from us (send a stamped addressed envelope). We will also make our full replies available to Red Action and Workers Power supporters.

First, let us look at Red Action's letter. This is a group that rarely ventures into print in any form; certainly, polemic is not something in which it frequently engages. Frankly, its (we presume) open letter to us is painfully short on politics but uncomfortably long on moaning.

The origins of this go back to Red Action's 'support' for the HOI! contingent on the 'Time To Go' demonstration last August. On the day, Red Action turned out only one person. Naturally we criticised this, and since then it has sought to cover its tracks with more and more irrational anti-Leninist outbursts; these have included heckling a Workers Theatre Movement agitprop performance in support of republican prisoners, and now, capping it all, a petulant refusal to sponsor the April demonstration.

The essential point of Red Action's letter is that HOI! was precipitately launched. In opposition to unitedly getting down to work, they throw up the bogey of an "in-depth discussion and debate" which should precede any initiative. Just how seriously it takes this can be gauged by the fact that RA has never done anything to bring us, them or other groups in the field of Irish solidarity together for this 'in-depth' chin-wag. But what is the contradiction between talk and action; why can't RA give us moral support?

RA advises us to save "the energy of [our] typist and the price of postage" by not sending them any more requests for support until we are ready to "sit around a

table" with them to discuss our future ideas for HOI! work and their own perspectives. Maybe then, they teasingly suggest, they might feel able to "re-evaluate" their attitude.

Of course, we are only too happy to talk and have already written to RA offering just that. But that cannot be the end of the matter.

We have always been prepared to debate, not least at the time of the first HOI! conference, to which RA was invited and to which, it admits, it "sent only one delegate" (who turned up two hours late). RA states that because there were "only two" political groups involved, with differing perspectives on Irish work, this marked the "effective end" of HOI! Incredible logic, and obviously not true.

RA effectively boycotted the first action of HOI! (which in spite of its absence was a great success), then it effectively boycotted the ideal opportunity for an 'in-depth debate' because, it says, HOI! is "irrelevant", as the two main organisations involved disagree with each other! This is plain daft.

One last point. RA leaders can think what they want about the HOI! Easter commemoration. They can refuse to sponsor, they can ignore it. That is their problem. The point is that they have made their refusal letter an *open* document; they have circulated it to other organisations; perhaps they even plan to print it in their paper. Thus, RA are effectively *demobilising* for our march: they are attempting to sabotage an event organised in Britain on principled anti-imperialist politics. That, frankly, is simply disgusting.

Not quite as disgusting as Workers Power's position, however. We had been assured verbally several times by a member of WP's Irish Commission that his organisation planned to support the commemoration. But no, Mark Hoskisson has written to us saying that WP may "(attend) the demo on the day", but it refuses to sponsor the event.

Apparently it "is simply not on" for Workers Power to call on "labour movement bodies" to sponsor "yet another" Irish march: "it would be dishonest of us to sponsor it when, in fact, we would not be doing anything to build for it." The most they promise us is that their members will not "actively oppose" the march when it is raised. Splendid.

Obviously somebody, somewhere, is not being 100% truthful, are they? We say a member of WP's Irish Commission, in an open

forum, talked of sponsorship; its supposed "investigations" reveal that the most that was said was that WP did not plan to oppose the demonstration when it came up in 'the labour movement' (ie, the Labour Party).

Tell us, comrades, were you planning to put a 'commitment not to oppose' our march – in the post? Hmm, that *would* have been useful. Perhaps we should formalise this category of sulky neutrality and include it on our publicity for the demo: leaflets could inform people that not only was the April commemoration 'sponsored by' but also 'not actively opposed by'. There is a word for this, WP; a word whose literal meaning is the plural of 'shoe repairer'.

Then there is the question of WP's work on the Irish question. Not to be too blunt, we have not exactly noticed WPers taking any sort of lead on *any* subject, let alone Ireland.

Its letter suggests that WP does not want to exhaust the 'labour movement bodies' they inhabit by calling on them to sponsor 'march after march'; the HOI! commemoration being "yet another" one, sandwiched "between Bloody Sunday and the forthcoming PTA march ... and the August marches".

The "anti-PTA march" was held in mid March: WP did not sponsor or mobilise anything in the labour movement for it. The same applied to last year's annual Manchester Martyrs Commemoration March. And although it usually gets its act together sufficiently to organise a contingent on the IFM's August demonstration, it does not sponsor it, nor effectively fight for it within its supposed 'labour movement' base.

Really, Workers Power, you must be exhausted. Tell us, is there an Irish demonstration, organised by anyone, anywhere in the country that you *are* prepared to sponsor and work for? Or do your terrible 'hard' principles prevent you from doing *any* work on Ireland whatsoever?

In coming up with excuses, none of which are very convincing: excuses why you cannot take up the fight to build principled solidarity in the here and now; excuses why you cannot fight for sponsorship for principled demonstrations; excuses why you cannot even give this fight *moral* backing. Ireland does not need excuses, it needs action. Excuses have nothing to do with solidarity, and excuses are what Red Action and Workers Power are full of ... among other things.

Mark Fischer

IN STRUGGLE

Workers at Bacton Fashions, East London, have been on strike for union recognition since February. Bacton's, like many others in this area, used unorganised migrant labour. When a number joined the TGWU they were promptly sacked, as were those who refused to cross their picket line. On February 26 a 100 strong picket was violently attacked by the police, including a Territorial Support Group. Four Turkish refugees were charged with public disorder and actual bodily harm. After this hardly anyone crossed the picket line, and the factory was closed. The owner is continuing production at Havun Ltd, nearby. So now both factories are being picketed, as is Dalston police station. The recently established defence campaign is demanding that the charges against the four be dropped. Because the TGWU has not yet made the strike official, strikers rely on their own initiative and the considerable local support, especially from other migrant workers. The strike is exemplary, it should be extended to sweep away the nineteenth century working practices which migrant workers are subject to. This goes hand in hand with the fight to smash Britain's immigration laws which give sweatshop owners a ready cheap pool of labour, simply because many migrants have such a precarious legal status in this country. Support the Bacton Strikers: phone Mike on (01) 249 6930 or write c/o Hackney TU Support Unit, 489 Kingsland Road, London E8. **SQ**

The Daily Mirror – owned by Labour Party millionaire Robert Maxwell – has fronted a vicious witch hunt against Arthur Scargill. He is said to have accepted money from the Soviet Union and the "terrorist state", Libya. Scargill says he repeatedly asked for money from the Soviet Union, none came. As to Libyan money, both Scargill and NUM general secretary, Peter Heathfield, deny any knowledge of it. We see no problem with taking money from the devil if it is to wage the class struggle. But it is the accusations of corruption that are meant to do the real damage. Scargill and Heathfield are said to have used Libyan money to finance their mortgages, yet as it turns out neither had a mortgage. As to former finance officer, Roger Windsor – source of the *Mirror* lies – he is actually the subject of a police investigation. In spite of this, Neil Kinnock and Scottish NUM leader, George Bolton (a Euro), used the *Mirror* story in an attempt to rubbish Scargill. The Kinnockites, ably assisted by Maxwell, are clearly trying to marginalise militancy at a time of revived working class combativity: Labour must be seen as a safe alternative to the crisis wracked Tories. Militants should have no illusions in Scargill, he is a left reformist, but in rebutting the bourgeois smear campaign against him we defend not only an individual but the memory of the heroic miners' strike. **SQ**



Scargill: a militant left reformist witch-hunted by Kinnock's rightwing cronies

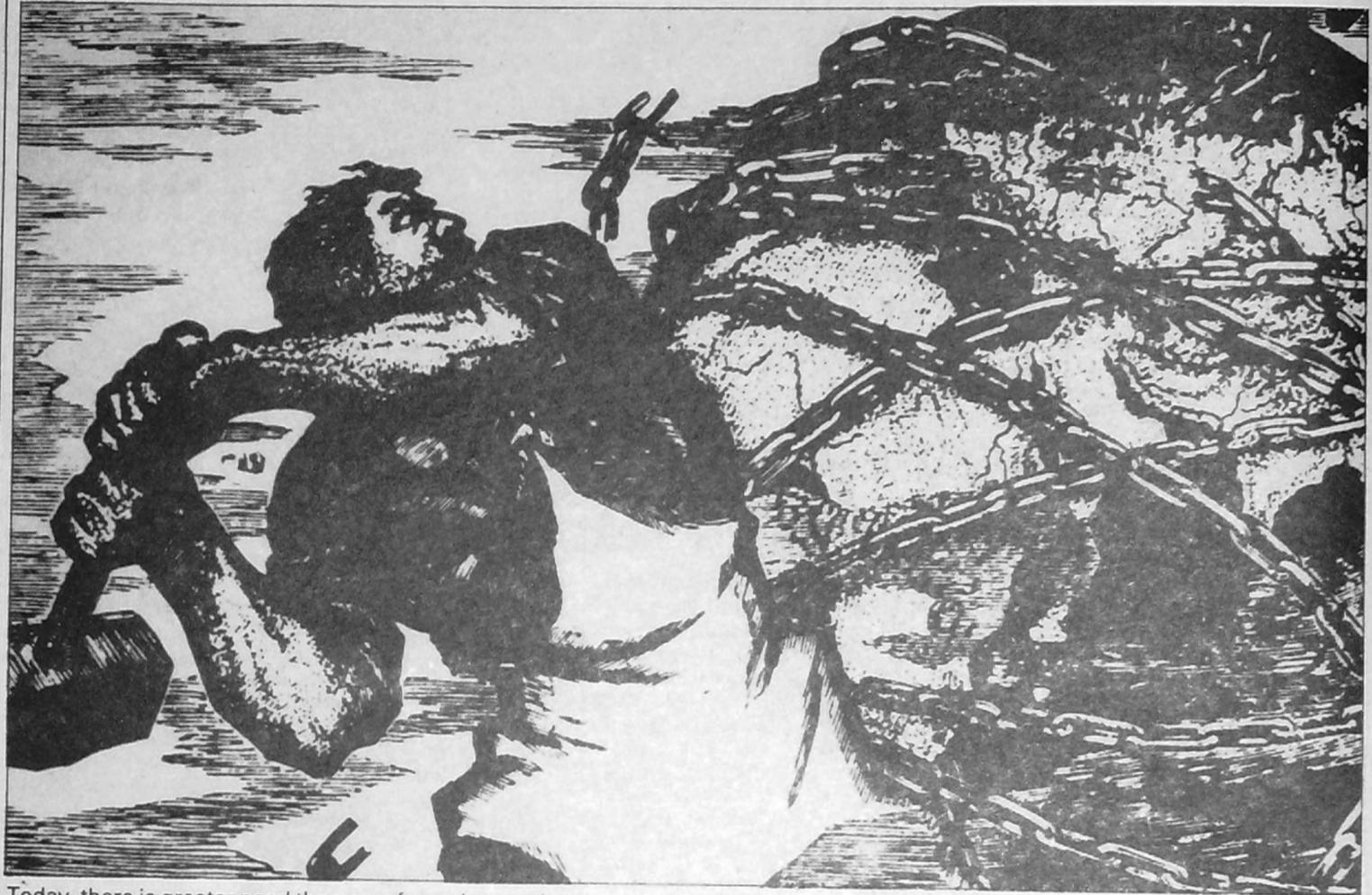
The Workers Theatre Movement cabaret, The Internationale, celebrated International Women's Day on March 8 with a capacity crowd. The tone was set by the new sketch, 'March 8', which dramatised the working class origins of IWD and its role as the spark for the Russian Revolution in 1917. WTM comrades also presented poetry from Central American female revolutionaries, a monologue by the Italian socialist writer, Franco Rame and a reading of Alexandra Kollontai's 'Women's Day 1913'. Among the many other contributions, including the North Staffs Miners Wives Action Group and the Artery Choir, perhaps the most moving were the songs about Irish women in struggle like Mairead Farrell, sung by Virginia Moyles. WTM comrades are now busy preparing their contributions to the fight against the Poll Tax, a new sketch 'Axe the Tax' and a piece called 'Riot Squad Cantata'. These will be performed at the London anti-poll tax demonstration on March 31 itself, and again after the demo, when The Internationale will be host to another package of hard hitting culture of resistance at The Old Piano Warehouse, Hawley Road, London NW1 at 7.30pm. Make Saturday, March 31, 1990 a day and night to remember! Axe the Tax! **GK**

Forward again



As we go to press our monthly £600 fighting fund, in particular with the help of comrades AS, MJ and a new regular £10 per week pledge from comrade NC, stands at £440. A good position to again go over the top. There is good news too with our £2,000 desk top publishing appeal which we launched last month. On top of the £500 from comrade NB, we have had three other substantial donations, £300 from comrade LG, £220 from comrade JC and £200 from comrade SK, as well as a number of smaller donations. With a short term loan we are going ahead with the purchase, but we must raise the money to repay the loan as soon as possible.

For real proletarian internationalism



Today, there is greater need than ever for an International

The collapse of bureaucratic socialism and the liquidation 'official communist' parties have produced claims from some that proletarian internationalism is dead and from others a tentative call for a new international. But what is proletarian internationalism and what sort of an international do we need?

TODAY we could well be witnessing the historic defeat of the Great October Socialist Revolution, and the loss of all the gains which the world's working class made in its wake. Several former socialist countries in Eastern Europe are now under overtly pro-capitalist regimes, and there is every sign that the world revolutionary centre itself, the Soviet Union, is in danger.

Tragically many ruling so-called 'communist' parties, which had in reality been transformed into parties of the bureaucracy, have played a leading role in the *counterrevolutionary* process. They, and many of their co-thinkers worldwide, are now busily transforming themselves into social democratic, ie bourgeois reformist, parties. Historically, the nearest parallel is 1914 (though with the productive forces much advanced, and therefore more ripe for world revolution). Opportunism has again given birth to counterrevolution.

The 1914-1948 capitalist general crisis brought social chaos, wars and revolutions, and the birth of socialism in the weak link of imperialism - in, by definition, extremely unfavourable circumstances. It is paradoxical but predictable that, with the unprecedented postwar boom over and done with, the first signs of a new general crisis should take effect in the relatively weak economies of the socialist countries before it hits the cushioned imperialist economies themselves. Ironically the crisis of backward bureaucratic socialism, far from indicating the superiority in practice of the capitalist social system, is in fact the harbinger of the world capitalist crisis.

The coming world crisis threatens us with nuclear holocaust in an inter-imperialist World War III, and therefore poses in the sharpest way the necessity of destroying imperialism through world revolution *before* imperialism brings human society to destruction. Therefore, this is no time for dissolving communist revolutionary theory into nebulous 'human values', but for reasserting the necessity of proletarian internationalism and examining precisely in what way the neglect of this scientific principle has lead to the present sorry state of our move-

ment. By learning the lessons of defeat, our movement will rise again strengthened ten-fold!

What is proletarian internationalism?

The international secretary of the 'official' Euro CPGB, Chris Myant, for whom the October Revolution was a "big mistake" responsible for all the evils of the twentieth century, tries to kill "the old ideas of proletarian internationalism" with faint praise (*7 Days*, March 17).

He admits it "*was* [my emphasis - IF] the hallmark of a communist. It gave communists a capacity to give themselves to struggle ... Today we need a wider vision", which regards people "not only as workers in this world, but as its citizens," and seeks "a wide unity of all who value people and progress ... There is no longer a world communist movement. This is good."

Mr Myant is a Gorbachevite reactionary. His non-class (in truth, bourgeois) utopian outlook has taken him so far from reality that he believes that the new Europe, dominated by German imperialism, is now "becoming the starting point for a new internationalism of cooperation."

The principle of proletarian internationalism is a cornerstone of Marxist-Leninist ideology. It reflects the objective necessity for the vanguard section of the world's working class to achieve ideological and organisational unity before it can successfully lead the proletariat, firstly, in overthrowing the bourgeois state, country by country, and then, through the world dictatorship of the proletariat a classless world communist society.

Proletarian internationalism is no utopian dogma dreamed up by communists and arbitrarily imposed on the workers' movement. Nor is it a question of anti-imperialist solidarity arising from the highest, imperialist, phase of capitalism. It is an objective law flowing from the universality of capitalist ex-

ploitation.

Already, three decades before competitive capitalism reached its peak and gave way to imperialism in the 1870s, Marx and Engels described, in their 1847 *Communist Manifesto*, how the bourgeoisie ignores national boundaries in its ruthless search for profit, overcomes capitalist crises by, *inter alia*, "the conquest of new markets" (p50, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1973 edition) and "compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production ... it creates a world after its own image." (p47) "National differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto." (p71)

Thus the development of the world market and the extension of capitalist exploitation world-wide created the international working class and, with it, the objective necessity for proletarian internationalism. International proletarian unity is a prerequisite for an effective struggle against international capitalism.

With the advent of the imperialist phase of capitalism, the emergence of finance capital and the creation of a single world economy through the export of capital, capitalist exploitation was further internationalised, dramatically enhancing the necessity for international workers unity.

"Enormous joint-stock companies are now being organised to set up capitalist enterprises not in one country, but in several at once; international associations of capitalists make their appearance. Capitalist domination is international. That is why the workers' struggle in all countries for their emancipation is only successful if the workers fight jointly against international capital." (VI Lenin, CW, Vol 2, p109).

As capital spreads its profit hungry tentacles into every nook and cranny, into every far flung corner of the world, creating "a world after its own image", it also creates the world's working class, its own gravediggers, whose liberation from capitalist exploitation

and oppression can only be achieved on a world scale, through world revolution and the building of world communism.

So far from being an expression of liberal sentimentalism for the oppressed, or a pious wish for the 'brotherhood of man', proletarian internationalism is a reflection of the objectively common interests of the workers of all countries, requiring the most ruthless struggle against the oppressor class.

Not spontaneous

Although the principle of proletarian internationalism is an objective law arising from the objectively common interests of the international working class, it does not arise spontaneously from the experience of working class struggle, but derives from all round political knowledge. One of the fundamental tasks of the Communist Party, therefore, is the inculcation of an internationalist outlook in the working class, as part of the struggle for communist consciousness.

Spontaneously, the working class adopts the ideas which permeate bourgeois society around it – ie bourgeois opportunist ideas, putting short term gains above long term and pursuing sectional interests before class interests. In the context of nationalism versus internationalism, opportunism means placing narrow national interests above the interests of the international working class, above the interests of the world revolution.

To cultivate and foster the spirit of proletarian internationalism, communists must constantly combat all expressions of national chauvinism and national narrowness, such as, for example, the demand from sections of the workers' movement in Britain for import controls – which means siding with the British bourgeoisie against its rivals, and therefore also against foreign workers – or immigration controls, which sets worker against worker. Communists must stand on the slogan 'No worker is illegal'.

Socialist states also necessarily face the contradiction between narrow state interests and the furthering of the world revolution. For example, as Jack Conrad pointed out, when it comes to the Soviet subsidy of the Cuban economy some "might say this is a bad investment, that the money would be better spent on much needed modernisation at home, which in profit and loss terms might well be true. In other words, there is a contradiction. If it is resolved in favour of narrow national interests, this is reactionary; if it is resolved in favour of the aim of world revolution, this is progressive." (*The Leninist* No58).

The spontaneous re-emergence and growth of all forms of opportunism, including nationalism, cannot cease with the victory of a socialist revolution in one country, only the establishment of a world union of socialist states and the triumph of communism. Throughout the long transition period – what Marx called "the lower phase of communism" – not only will the cultural heritage of class society persist through the tenacity of inertia, "the greatest force in history" (Lenin), but the still limited socialist economic base will continue to generate spontaneous sectionalism of every kind.

As we have seen, nationalism will continue to enjoy a material foundation until the socialist organisation of the world economy has raised production to the level of abundance, providing the material conditions which will make the "higher phase of communism" possible. Only then can the last vestiges of nationalism, and all sectionalism, suffer final defeat at the hands of communist consciousness.

Under socialism, then, the communist vanguard must continue to wage an unabated struggle for conscious proletarian internationalism, against all forms of spontaneous nationalism, for a working class "transformed from a class in itself – turned against itself by nation, its vision limited to narrow national interest – into a class for itself, which is fully conscious of its historic mission to do away with all national boundaries and antagonisms." (Jack Conrad, *The Leninist* No58).

In the USSR there has for very many years only been a lip service to proletarian internationalism. As early as the mid twenties the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, under Stalin, had substituted the state interests of the Soviet bureaucracy for the interests of the world revolution as its guiding principle. And through its dominant position in the Comintern it was able to transform the communist parties into diplomatic arms of the Soviet

state, so that Harry Pollitt, general secretary of the CPGB, could say at 1935 London District Congress that the Party supports "100%, and without any reservations, everything the Soviet Union does in its foreign policy."

This had tragic results. The class collaborationist Popular Front policy, adopted at the 1935 Seventh (and last) Congress of the Comintern, sought to rally 'progressive' imperialism to side with the Soviet Union against reactionary, aggressive, fascist imperialism. Instead of seeing fascism as a particular form of dictatorship of the bourgeoisie as a whole, the Seventh Congress adopted Dimitrov's definition: "Fascism is the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, chauvinist and imperialist elements of finance-capital." This planted the seeds of national chauvinism in the communist parties, each siding with 'their own' bourgeoisie, bearing fruit in reformist nationalist party programmes, such as our *British Road to Socialism*, and ultimately in anti-Soviet and anti-communist social democratisation.

The turning of the CPSU away from the task of world revolution, given practical expression in the dissolving of Comintern in 1943, was reflected in Stalin's claim that "the Soviet Union is rapidly approaching communism". Kruschev, who while condemning Stalin's personality cult, incorporated this into the 1961 CPSU Programme. It claimed that: "The material and technical basis of communism will be built up by the end of the second decade (1971-80), ensuring an abundance of material and cultural values for the whole population ... The construction of communist society will be fully completed in the subsequent period... The Party solemnly proclaims: the present generation of Soviet people shall live in communism!" The Soviet Union could go it alone without world revolution and the world dictatorship of the proletariat, communism could be built *within state boundaries!*

This programme of communism in one country was, not surprisingly, reproduced in the new postwar socialist states, involving a conflict between subordination to Soviet state interests and the separate interests of each particular state. Thus, Tito's refusal to subordinate Yugoslavia to Stalin's will led to the 'excommunication' of his party from the world communist movement, a situation reproduced on a bigger scale in the 1960s with the schism between the Soviet and Chinese parties.

World revolution requires a world party

Although today the 'official' world communist movement is liquidating itself into social democracy, bureaucratic socialism is collapsing back into capitalism (and into the arms of profit hungry imperialism), and inter-imperialist rivalries are coming to the fore in world politics, the internationalisation of capitalist production is proceeding at an unprecedented pace. The objective need for a new Communist International is therefore greater than ever.

The class ridden capitalist world of wars and starvation, ignorance and inequality, must be transformed into a classless communist society in which the state has withered away and the "public power will lose its political character" (*Communist Manifesto*, p76); in which nations no longer exist, the myriad national cultures having fused into one world language and culture; in which the division between manual and mental labour – indeed, between work and play – has ceased to exist; in which the only kind of social inequality will be the expression of individual differences through the economic principle of the higher phase of communism: from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs – the needs and abilities of all individuals, of course, being different and unequal.

Such a transformation will not be achieved simply by the spread of communist ideology, by preaching proletarian internationalism Christian fashion, until every individual has been won over and nationalism expunged from human consciousness by argument. Education in the spirit of proletarian internationalism, though an essential aspect of the struggle for communism, does not automatically lead to internationalist practice. Marxism combines theory with practice; we must put theory into practice. The objective need to unite the national contingents of the world's working class in the practical struggle for world revolution makes necessary not just ideological unity in understanding the causes and nature of its oppression, but the trans-

lation of this into a single concrete programme of action and the forging of a democratic centralist world proletarian party, standing on the shoulders of Lenin's Third (Communist) International by drawing on its lessons good and bad, and the lessons of all the preceding internationals.

• The Communist League (1847-52) was made up of small groups of revolutionary workers. It was shortlived, dissolving itself because of ideological differences, but left for posterity the theoretical foundation stone of the *Communist Manifesto*.

• The First International (1864-76) could not set out from the communist principles laid down in the *Manifesto*, because it united the different political trends in the workers movement, but Engels, in his letter to Sorge dated September 12, 1874, believed "the next International ... will be directly Communist and will proclaim precisely our principles."

• The Second International (1889-1914) did that, however, it was never a democratic centralist organisation and included anarchists (until their expulsion in 1896) and trade unions, and the parties split between Marxism and opportunism. The collapse of the Second International in 1914, as Lenin said, was the collapse of opportunism.

• The Third International (1919-1943), launched on explicitly communist principles, with conditions of membership designed to exclude the centrism of the Second International, broke up as a result of the growth of bureaucratic centrism.

The lesson of all this is not, as Eric Trevett of the New Communist Party has it, that "In all probability a new international will evolve out of the current struggle." Or that it "will almost certainly have different organisational characteristics and reduced executive powers from that of the Third International." (*New Worker*, February 23; my emphasis – IF).

Firstly it will not evolve, Eric! It has to be forged by the conscious action of communists. Secondly, what is required, in conditions of greater internationalisation of production is greater centralism, not less.

In the end the problem with the Third International was not too much democratic centralism, but precisely bureaucratic centralism – which produced the mealy-mouthed, tailist political prostitute which is the NCP today, exchanging uncritical political support for the ruling parties in such countries as Ethiopia, Afghanistan and (formerly) Czechoslovakia, for financial backing.

It is pitiful to see the NCP prostitute seeking to preserve its miserable existence through an unprincipled calls for unity with the CPB and the Euro organisation, and scavenging around the world in the search for new financial backing. This is, unfortunately, the true meaning of Trevett's contention of a "fight to strengthen internationalism in the communist movement", that "sound parties are inevitably gravitating towards each other" and his announcement of a five year co-operation agreement with the Socialist Party of the Democratic Republic of Yemen (a party which has just agreed to unity with feudal-capitalist North Yemen), and forthcoming talks with the Workers Party of Korea (April) and the Communist Party of Cuba (June).

Ideological unity around the most advanced theory, around Marxist-Leninist revolutionary ideology freed of the last vestiges of opportunism through open polemic, can be the only basis for a new International. The NCP, whose tailism is matched only by its faith in the bourgeois Labour Party to deliver socialism in Britain, clearly has no place in it.

National in form, international in essence

Despite its international essence, the struggle for world revolution must be carried out country by country, for the overthrow of individual bourgeois states, adding new socialist states to those already existing, one by one. This is how the *Communist Manifesto* (p59) puts it: "Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie."

Lenin said the same thing: "There is one, and only one, kind of real internationalism, and that is working wholeheartedly for the development of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary struggle in one's own country, and supporting (by propaganda, sympathy and material aid) this struggle, this, and only this, line, in every country without

exception." (Lenin, CW Vol 24, p75).

The first internationalist duty of communists is therefore to forge genuine communist parties and make revolution at home, against 'one's own' bourgeoisie. Of course, when a revolutionary situation arises in a particular country it is not simply due to developments within the state boundaries, but to the position of that country within the international situation. Thus, Lenin saw the Great October Socialist Revolution not simply as a *Russian* revolution, but as the opening move of the *world* revolution.

It was only possible because of the world crisis of imperialism, and because Russia was the "weak link" in the imperialist chain. All the contradictions of the world imperialist crisis were concentrated in the crucible of Russia, the hothouse of rapidly developing and changeable conditions in which the Bolshevik "party of a new type" could learn its lessons, develop and refine its strategy, become skilled and flexible in its tactics and its cadres become steeled in struggle. The lessons of Bolshevism were (and still are) not Russian, but *world* lessons, deriving from the 'sharp end' of the world crisis of imperialism.

Communists, in building the revolutionary movement and making revolution in their own country, must start with the most advanced communist theory and practice in the world to date. To restrict oneself to narrow national experience would be criminal. To 'stand on the shoulders' of the world's working class, by a critical adoption of its highest theoretical achievements, is what is necessary. That is exactly our method in the Communist Party of Great Britain (*The Leninist*).

Diplomatic internationalism as practiced by the NCP and other 'official communists' is useless for the working class. Fraternal criticism and open polemic against all forms of opportunism is a precondition for the forging of proletarian internationalism and a genuine Communist Party capable of leading the revolutionary struggle in its country.

Just as revolutionary struggle in each country is only possible on the basis of the most rigorous defence of internationalism, so proletarian internationalism means, first and foremost, making revolution at home, in one's own country. Without this, 'solidarity' is an empty gesture. Proletarian internationalism is an aspect of the revolutionary struggle against one's own bourgeoisie. That is why, for example, we look with such scorn upon those who prefer 'revolutionary tourism' rather than face up to the tasks of making revolution in Britain.

Just as the outbreak of World War I brought the opportunism of the Second International out into the open for all to see, so the counterrevolutions in Eastern Europe, and the burgeoning counterrevolution in the Soviet Union itself, are fully exposing the opportunism of the 'official' world communist movement today.

Our experience tells us that in Britain even in this period of its disintegration we cannot expect large numbers from 'official communists' to come over to Leninism. Many have defected to social democracy individually, before their parties. Others have retired from active politics into private life. Still others have found themselves a safe niche in 'solidarity work'. It is to the working class itself that we look. New struggles will bring forth new cadres and lay the basis for a new International.

The massive defeats for the world's working class we are witnessing herald a bleak period of reaction. When albeit temporarily, the bourgeoisie will be on the ideological offensive and the vanguard section, the politically conscious section, of the world's working class will suffer demoralisation.

The tasks posed to communists in such a period of defeat and demoralisation are to preserve our communist organisation and theory, analyse the lessons of defeat, and prepare communist cadres for future struggles. For us this demands the strengthening of our international links and contacts. That is why we have organised a week long international school in May. While this is a splendid initiative our ability to take a lead is very limited. As comrade R Yurukoglu said "For a communist party, the degree to which it can fulfil its international tasks truly and successfully, is directly proportional to its presence, strength and influence in its own country." (*Proletarian Internationalism*, p67) Britain today has no Communist Party. In other words our main task remains reforging our CPGB, that is our proletarian internationalist duty. To the extent that we succeed in this task proletarian internationalism in Britain becomes real.

Ian Farrell

&

70 YEARS

Our history

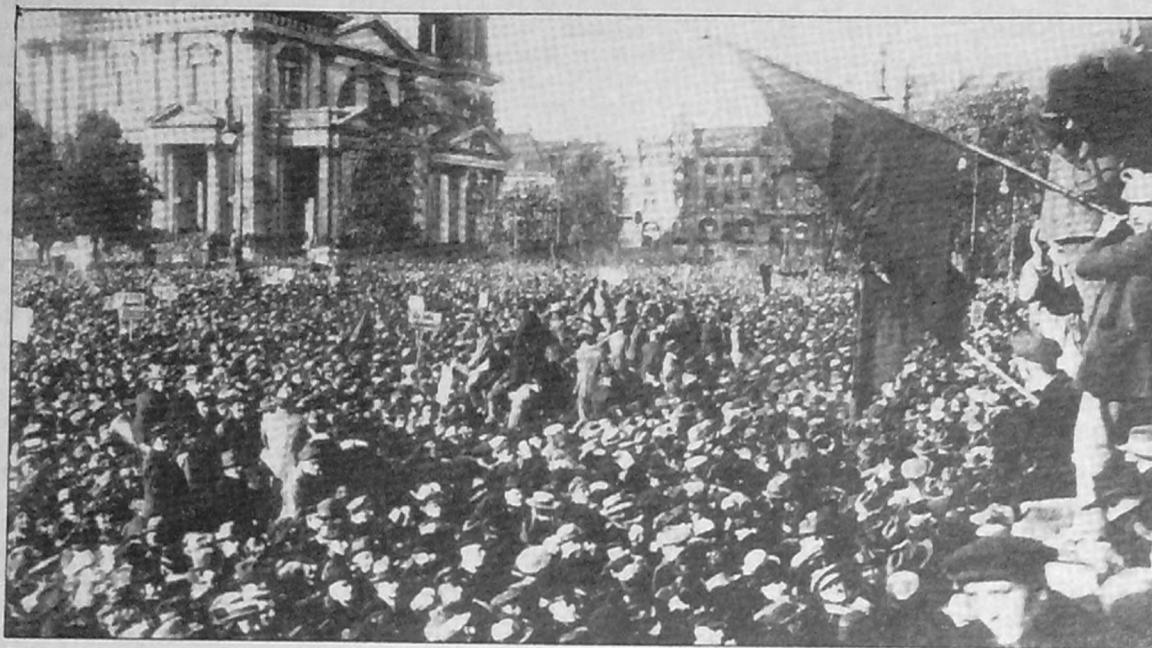
The formation of the CPGB and its early years: articles, documents and manifestos

You'd think that the IRA's recent successful bomb attack on Shorts missile factory would gladden the hearts of all communists. Not so the Communist Party of Ireland, who condemned the action against an arm of Britain's war machine as a "sheer act of naked terrorism against the whole community". Since when has 'the whole community' been equipped with blowpipe and starstreak ground-to-air missiles? The IRA bomb, continues the CPI, also "undermined" the "non-sectarian atmosphere" in this prime example of imperialist aggression. Does the CPI have its offices based on Mars, or is it just that it is a naked apologist for British imperialism and loyalism?

The 'official communists' of the Party of Democratic Socialism in the GDR are determined to make the best of a very bad job indeed. Dr Klaus Steiniger, writing in the *falling Yawning Star*, March 23, states that the 16.3% they got of the vote was "an inspiring step forward". This, you see, is because lots of West German lolly was backing up the rest. Fair play, lads and lasses, you only had the backing of the GDR state for forty five years, didn't you? The 10% gleaned by the Hungarian Socialist Party will no doubt be reported as an even greater 'inspiring step forward' in the Star.

Colonel Blimp's favourite read, the Telegraph, reports of the anti-poll tax demos: "The quasi-Palestinian scarves and battle fatigues are odds-on to belong to members of the Revolutionary Communist Party selling *Marxism Today*". Well informed stuff indeed, especially since the RCP isn't touching the poll tax issue - much in line with the Marxism Today crew, come to think of it. We are busily scanning the Telegraph's columns for news of any RCP-Euro merger.

The Communist Party of Britain and the Euro Communist Party of Great Britain joined hands to commemorate the 106th anniversary of Marx's death, in Highgate cemetery. "Marxism is not dead", said leading Euro hack Gerry Pocock, directly contradicting a statement by the editor of his organisation's 'theoretical' journal. CPB reformist, Mary Rosser, chaired proceedings. Not an ill word was exchanged. How apt that these two corpses of 'official communism' should hold their meeting in a graveyard. Six feet down, Marx must have been doing somersaults.



Defence of the October Revolution

DURING THE summer of 1918 British armed forces actively intervened in Russia in an attempt to crush Soviet power. They occupied Murmansk, Archangel, Baku and Vladivostok and bombarded the coasts of the Baltic and the Black Sea. Revolutionaries in Britain quickly spoke out in defence of the land of the soviets:

The Allied Intervention in Russia Manifesto of the British Socialist Party

Deaf to the protests of financiers but inspired by the ideals of International Labour, the Bolsheviks are wresting the main industries from the hands of their capitalist owners, declaring the means of production to be the common property of the Russian people, and imposing on the workers in each industry the responsibility for its control. Hence every capitalist and financier, whatever his nationality, cries: Down with the Bolsheviks! In placing the power of the franchise in the hands of the workers, soldiers, and peasants, the Bolsheviks swept away the false bases for the right to vote known to Western nations, such as property qualifications or, in the case of women, age and marriage, and made the title to vote dependent upon the performance of social labour. Hence every reactionary, whatever his nationality, fearing the consequence of a labour franchise, cries: Down with the Bolsheviks! Their enemies allege that the Bolsheviks have made mistakes and committed excesses. But what are their alleged mistakes and excesses compared with the known crimes of their critics who rule the world now?

... It is because the control of natural resources by Labour is dreaded by the great majority of the rich and wealthy that they call for war on the Russian Socialist Republic.

The British Socialist Party there-

fore urges all organisations whose members realise that the defeat of Russian Socialism is the defeat of Labour everywhere, to pass the following resolution and make it known as widely as possible:

"This meeting of workers protests against the armed intervention in Russia in opposition to the declared wishes of the Soviet Government and in direct contradiction to the Allies pronouncement in favour of the self-determination of all nations. This meeting believes that the overthrow of the Soviet administration would be a disaster to the organised Labour Movement throughout the world, and could only be construed as evidence of the intention of Governments to make war on the working class. It calls upon the British Government to abandon its present policy with regard to Russia and instead to offer Russia the technical and economic aid required for her reconstruction."

Executive Committee of the British Socialist Party
The Call, No 125, Thursday August 29, 1918.

The most outstanding work in defence of Soviet Russia was carried out by the Workers Socialist Federation, a small leftist organisation based in London's East End (it went on to participate in negotiations with the BSP to establish the CPGB).

The WSF was led by Sylvia Pankhurst, an outstanding champion of the rights of working class women, who edited its paper the *Workers Dreadnought*. Among its most active members during 1919 was Harry Pollitt (later general secretary of the CPGB). He joined the WSF because it was far more dynamic than the BSP, though he seems to have maintained dual membership. He and the WSF worked tirelessly in London's docklands to persuade workers not to handle munitions intended for use against Russia.

On January 18, 1919 a national Hands off Russia conference was called by the London Workers Committee in association with the

Socialist Labour Party and the BSP:

Hands off Russia

The arrangements for the Conference and mass meeting, convened by the London Workers' Committee for the purpose of demanding the withdrawal of troops from Russia, to be held in Saturday, January 18th at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, EC, are now completed. The Conference will open at 10am, with WF Watson in the Chair, and, with an interval for lunch, will continue until 5 o'clock. The mass meeting will commence at 7.30pm, doors open at 6.30. Between 6.30 and 7.30 there will be music under the direction of Cedar Paul ...

See that your organisation is represented at the Conference. Admission free. No tickets are required.

The Call No 144, Thursday January 9, 1919

The conference was a great success. There were 350, mostly workplace and trade union, delegates. The main resolution, moved by Pollitt, pledged to "carry on active agitation to solidify the labour movement for the purposes of declaring ... a general strike" unless the intervention against Soviet Russia was unconditionally ended. In June 1919 the committee elected at the January conference was superseded by a National Hands off Russia Committee. Although it had Pollitt as its organiser, it was made up of the 'big' trade union names of the day: the TUC's AA Purcell, CT Cramp of the NUR, Tom Mann, general secretary of the ASE, George Peet, secretary of the National Shop Stewards Committee, John Bromley general secretary of the loco-men and firemen, and John Hill, general secretary of the boilermakers' union. While this greatly extended the reach of the campaign it did not mean that the trade union bureaucracy had been won over to communism:

The Russian Revolution in danger

The British munitions are strangling the Russian Revolution. Denken advances constantly with terrible and ever more certain menace.

British workers, sailors, dockers, engineers, what are you doing?

You are helping the master class to exterminate your brothers; to crush the hope of Communism throughout the world!

The Southport Labour Party Conference decided to organise a general strike to stop the war on Soviet Russia. To the Executive was left the task of making arrangements with the Trade Unions and the duty of fixing the day. The joint executive did nothing: it disobeyed orders.

The spirit of the Glasgow Trade Union Congress which followed was also emphatically for the strike, and its executive - the Parliamentary Committee - was censured because it had failed to call a delegate conference to decide the question. The Parliamentary Committee was now ordered to call this conference immediately. Why has the conference not been called?

The Russian Revolution is being strangled not by the Government, but by the half-hearted officials who pretend to lead the workers, but who are merely marking time. They will mark time until, as they expect, the Revolution is destroyed and none need fear it. They will use their postmortem sympathy for it to secure cheap cheers from those who are politically asleep today.

We address ourselves not to the avowed enemies of the Workers' Revolution, Thomas, Henderson, MacDonald and their like, but to its so-called friends - Smillie Williams, Hodges, Cramp, Bromley.

What are these men doing in this hour of crisis?

... If Smillie, Williams, Cramp, Hodges, and Bromley were in truth keenly alive to the workers' interests, keenly alive, far-seeing and earnest to serve them well, they would denounce the traitors within the movement as more dangerous to the cause of working class emancipation than the very capitalists themselves!

... Workers! We appeal to you not to wait for the timid opportunists who presume to lead you. Only the General Strike and the sabotage of munitions can save the Soviets.

Awake then, and in acting for yourselves without leaders, register a vow that you will fling from your executive organs everyone who has not taken an active part in bringing about the General Strike against the intervention in Russia. That issue is the test of their value to the workers' cause, both nationally and internationally.

Workers Dreadnought, Vol 6, No 31, Saturday October 25, 1919

Editorial by E Sylvia Pankhurst.

In May 1920 dockers refused to load the *Jolly George*. It electrified the whole working class movement. Three months later the Labour Party and the TUC set up a National Council of Action which threatened to "call for any and every form of withdrawal of labour" in defence of Soviet Russia. Across the country the working class prepared for a general strike and perhaps more, 350 local Councils of Action were set up - "they were not called soviets but in actual fact they were such" insisted Lenin. The Lloyd George government decided it had no choice, all British support for armed action against Russia was ended.

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SUBSCRIBE**The Road to Hell****Irish Republican Socialist Party, Starry Plough, February 1990, pp12, 40p, from 392 Falls Road, Belfast 12.**THE LATEST *Starry Plough* carries a full back page article by comrade Francis Glenn replying to the criticisms we have raised of the paper and the IRSP. We will concentrate on replying to this polemic, though the ground covered prohibits any comprehensive reply here.

He covers three basic areas: the question of solidarity work and Hands Off Ireland!, and the accusations of eclecticism, and of left nationalism, that we have levelled at the IRSP.

On HOI!, I shall be brief, as we have covered this ground before, especially in *The Leninist* issue 82, which incidentally comrade Glenn does not answer. However, he makes one revealing comment: "has HOI! the defeat of Britain in Ireland as its *raison d'être*, or is it striving to be the most ideologically correct solidarity movement...?" Is it not clear to the comrade that the two are inextricable? Can an effective solidarity movement be built that is not ideologically correct?Comrade Glenn emphasises that the IRSP has no real problem with the politics of HOI!, it's just that it "has simply managed to isolate itself from a potentially wider base"; ie, Red Action – see page three in this edition of *The Leninist*. The theory is apparently fine, but the IRSP clearly wants its mass movement delivered on a plate.

Now, to the question of 'eclectics': comrade Glenn counterposes our supposed "Leninist fundamentalism" to their "encouragement of much needed debate". What is the debate you are encouraging? In a situation where 'official communism' is in terminal crisis, comrade Dermot McBride, a leading writer, is still asking, "is the Soviet Union a socialist or a state capitalist country, is the bureaucracy a ruling class?" Never try and debate with someone who doesn't know what they think. Comrades, if you are not quick, history will resolve this question for you, as it has already done through counterrevolution in the GDR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania.

Debate is generated and directed by a decisive lead. The Bolsheviks generated more debate than any other trend in the revolutionary movement, yet Lenin did not give a millimetre on clarity. And remember, the situation in Tsarist Russia did not offer "the luxury of spending two years closeted in internal debates" either.

Comrades, we are all for debate, that is why we welcome you to our coming school, but debate must be given a clarity, sharpness and direction which the *Starry Plough* still lacks. This can be resolved only by your leadership. If not, the result can only be eclecticism.Comrade Glenn is most disingenuous when it comes to rebutting our criticisms of his paper's left nationalism. He comments that we have "freely thrown" accusations of "left nationalism and even poisonous nationalism". But he doesn't give the contexts in which we stated this. Those with more than a passing interest in *why* should consult our back issues, as space does not permit elaboration here.

There is one example given: the

question of the IRSP's seeming support for the closure of the Harland and Wolff shipyards. This is justified on the basis that to do otherwise would be to "protect a bastion of fascism". This when, in a paper committed to 'debate', there has not been one article on how to relate to protestant workers and break them from loyalism.

Comrades, if you had people in Harland and Wolff, what would be your advice to them? To stand aside from the fight to keep the shipyards open, to advocate their closure? Does the democratic right to work not apply when it comes to reactionary workers? Is this how you propose to win over protestant workers?

The character of IRSP propaganda is generally directed to the nationalist community in the Six Counties, not to the working class in Ireland as a whole. There is no comprehension of how to relate to protestant workers. This is a classic example of Irish nationalist ideology.

Counterpose this to the work done by the CPGB in East London in the 30s, for all its faults, in breaking the hold of fascism on many workers, by taking up the fight around rents, employment, etc (see Phil Piratin's *Our Flag Stays Red*).

Comrades, claiming commitment to "the fundamental principles of scientific socialism" and to be "steadily developing towards a genuine communist party", while laudable aims, must be backed up with rigorous Marxist-Leninist theory. Good intentions are not good enough. Remember what the road to hell is paved with.

Alan Merrik

Grant Radical**John McGrath** (author and director), *Border Warfare*, Channel 4, March 1990JOHN McGrath has always been a populist; his philosophy on theatre is summed up in the title of his book, *A good night out*. He made his name with 'Z Cars', the 1960s TV series, supposedly showing what life was really like for your average Lancashire copper. But above all, he is known for his work in radical theatre, such as in 7:84.

Previously, the big baddy in his plays was the American 'multinational' muscling in on the puny wee Scottish company but meeting their match in the wee Scottish wifie, invariably played by his wife, Elizabeth MacLennan. She hails from the Scottish landed gentry and is sister of Robert, the short lived leader of one of the SDP's; you know, the chap who was always bursting into tears as his party disintegrated.

Add her Euro brother, Dave, whose company, Wilcat, produced the stage version of 'Border Warfare' and you have what was known as the 'McMafia', who have grabbed all the Scottish Arts Council money set aside for worthy 'socialist' theatre for years as well as the patronage of the trade union bureaucracy.

But what of 'Border Warfare'? With his keen eye for the bandwagon, McGrath's main enemy is no longer Uncle Sam but (you've guessed it) the English. Yes, he throws in Irish and German stereotypes with 'jokes' about potatoes and cabbage, but it is primarily the English that McGrath really wants to have a go at. This is set up in the opening sequence where England today is personified as a 'lager lout' mugging an old lady. It gets worse.

The three hour piece purports to display 800 years of bloody oppression of Scotland, but far

from giving any sort of socialistic version of this, its all kings and queens. Even here though McGrath manages to put in a few more stereotypes. Virtually all the English kings and the 'traitor' Scottish are portrayed as effeminate 'queens' while the 'heroes' are hard, handsome and hairy.

The masses' walk-on walk-off role owes far more to the fascist myth of 'ein Volk' than to Marx. I do not state this lightly because although McGrath is undoubtedly a clapped out writer, he is proving relatively successful in exploiting nationalist sentiment. His next production, again backed by Channel 4, is his 'history' of the Scottish labour movement from 1760 to the present day which is now playing in Glasgow.

While we did not like 'Border Warfare' it must be said others did. "Championing the culture of resistance" ran headline of the *Morning Star* (February 9). Art critic, Sawtell, saw Meyerhold in co-operation with Brecht, more accurate would be a 'Whose line is it anyway?' improvisation in the style of a Wagnerian opera.

True, McGrath's petty bourgeois nationalism has a veneer of class politics, which is all Sawtell wants. He states that "the concept of working class unity between the Scots and the English is highlighted ... by showing the two peoples cooperating with each other in specific industrial struggles". There was, in fact, only one example of working class unity, the Chartist movement, which is explained away as a necessary but temporary evil forced on the Scots because of the way the Scottish and English ruling class had combined. But Sawtell knows nothing about class politics, he just wants to lick arse.

Suffice to say that the formation of the CPGB, which united the best class fighters in our nation, is not mentioned. Yet the one significant revolutionary who refused to join its ranks, John MacLean, is given star treatment.

Undoubtedly, MacLean was an outstanding working class leader in his day but his refusal to join the British section of Lenin's international party, the CPGB – whose formation still represents the highest achievement of the working class in Britain to date – was his undoing. He formed a short lived Scottish Workers Republican Party; that after a lifetime of principled opposition to any manifestation of nationalism.

That is not to say that there is nothing funny in 'Boarder Warfare'. It's just that any smile you've managed to raise is wiped off your face by awful politics. For example after a fairly amusing sequence in which the parliamentary activities of various Scots MPs (but not the Communist MP for Fife, Willie Gallagher – that would spoil McGrath's version of history) are portrayed in terms of a football match, Thatcher makes a big entrance aboard the wooden eagle previously used by the Calvinist preacher, John Knox. Basically, she says 'Fe-fu-fu-fum, I smell the blood of a Scots man' then the grinding bones bit and we are left with the message from one of the Scottish women that they will 'raise a riot' in defiance.

Well that is just what the working class in England have been doing over the poll tax. Life has answered McGrath and his ilk who peddle the reactionary lie that everyone in England votes Tory. Life demands the unity of the working class in Britain and for that matter the world over. We do not need any more nationalist poison, no matter what socialistic sugar coating it is given.

Gavin Kyle

South Africa – Ireland: Solidarity with all freedom fighters

WHEN NELSON Mandela walked free, the British establishment went wild. Every time you tuned into Radio 1 on the day, The Specials AKA's 'Free Nelson Mandela' seemed to be playing. Television news showed film of him, 'slomo', fist raised in defiance, surrounded by jubilant crowds. He even got an invitation – which he refused – from the hypocrite Thatcher.

Yet cast your mind back a little while before this, to the release of four other political prisoners: Paul Hill, Gerry Conlon, Carole Richardson and Paddy Armstrong – the Guildford Four. Where then was the media celebration at the release of political hostages by a brutal, corrupt and repressive state machine? No songs on Britain's radio stations for these four, no invitations to tea and biscuits at Number 10.

Ah, we are told, but there are differences. Indeed there are. Mandela was and is a leading figure in the ANC and the South African liberation struggle. He played an important role in establishing the armed wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe, which has been a severe thorn in the side of apartheid ever since. In his first speech when released, Mandela rightly defended the right of the South African masses to respond to apartheid terror with armed struggle. It is doubtful that the Guildford Four knew one end of a gun from another.

Double standards? You bet. It's not so long ago – at the Commonwealth Summit of 1987 in Vancouver, in fact – that the same Margaret Thatcher who welcomed Mandela's release stated that the ANC was "a terrorist organisation on a par with the IRA and PLO, and that she would never be seen engaging in talks with its leaders" (*The Guardian's* South African correspondent, David Beresford, quoted in *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, March 8 1990). In an attempt to ride on sympathy for South African freedom, and banking on a negotiated settlement, Thatcher has eaten her words and plastered on a crocodile smile.

The nature of the South African and Six County states is not so very different, as Thatcher, in her own way, recognises. In 1963 John Vorster, the then South African Minister of Justice, stated, on the introduction of an apartheid Coercion Bill, that he "would be willing to exchange all the legislation of that sort for one clause of the Northern Ireland Special Powers Act" (quoted in M Farrell, *Northern Ireland: The Orange State*, pp93-4).

Nationalists in the Six Counties, like non-whites in South Africa, have been systematically excluded from any say, decent housing, jobs, etc. In the late 60s, as in Sharpeville in South Africa, this brought about a social explosion as people took to the streets to demonstrate for basic rights. Like in South Africa, they were met with repression, beaten and shot off the



A Belfast wall mural makes the point more eloquently than a thousand British left excuses

The nature of the South African and Six County states is in many ways the same. Many thousands 'Tell Mrs Thatcher: stop supporting apartheid', but when it comes to British troops in Ireland its a different story. We aim to change that

streets. And, again like in South Africa, ordinary people were forced to take up arms to defend themselves and to fight for even the most basic democratic rights.

South African apartheid and British imperialism responded in the same way: "Both governments endlessly claimed it was not a war but a struggle against criminality. This was endlessly betrayed by the weapons used; by the perversions of the rule of law and by the abuse of democratic principle ... South Africa's present hit-squad scandal underlines this point: it echoes Stalker and the shoot-to-kill controversy..." (Beresford, *op cit*). This, remember, comes not from an Irish republican or a communist, but from a journalist writing in a 'respectable' bourgeois paper. Britain is fighting a colonial war against the Irish people, and against their armies of national liberation, the IRA and Inla.

Why these double standards, not just among the British government, but also radicals and self-proclaimed revolutionaries? State misinformation is not the only answer, with the banning of representatives of the republican and republican socialist movements from British TV and radio and the constant barrage of pro-British propaganda. Certainly it does not explain the position of many left wingers, who cannot plead ignorance.

Yet repeatedly the struggle in South Africa can pull tens – even occasionally hundreds – of thousands of people in Britain onto the streets in its support, when a similar struggle 'next door' pulls demonstrations that rarely nudge into the lower thousands. Kinnock – whose party sent in the troops back

in 1969 – can wax lyrical over Mandela's release, tears in his eyes, alongside advocating harsher measures against Irish republicans. It is obvious that he and his party are no friends of Irish freedom. And, fine words aside, this ought to warn all supporters of freedom in South Africa what their 'support' will be worth when the crunch comes.

Left groups, from the geriatric reformists of the Communist Party of Britain to the r-r-revolutionaries of the Socialist Workers Party, put Ireland way down on their list of priorities. When they do take up Ireland, it is done through campaigns such as the 'once-a-decade' Time To Go campaign. Last year TTG organised a twentieth anniversary commemoration of the Irish war, on the nebulous slogan of a British withdrawal – though not, you understand, now. It campaigned for a British commitment to withdraw (eventually), along the lines of 'bring our boys back home' and 'save British taxpayers money'. TTG leaders were careful to dissociate themselves from any identification with the liberation war. We reiterate this because, sadly, it is an approach which has characterised British 'solidarity' with Irish self determination.

Aside from the chauvinism of this stance – or, more correctly, because of it – such 'British solutions' are doomed to failure. Britain's war in Ireland is no 'outdated colonial policy'. The British state understands full well the importance of the occupation of the Six Counties, even if much of the British left does not. TE Utley, a former leader writer for the *Daily Telegraph*, put the imperialist

interest succinctly: "British security is hardly compatible with the existence of a Cuba a few miles off our own shores. Any notion that the vacuum created by the withdrawal of United Kingdom troops would be promptly and smoothly filled by a successful invasion of the North by the Irish Republic and, as a result, the establishment throughout Ireland of a peaceful, if rather inefficient and corrupt, bourgeois state, is absurd" (quoted in *The Leninist* No14).

For British imperialism, to withdraw from Ireland would be to concede defeat. To concede defeat in Belfast, as I believe Enoch Powell once stated, would be to invite defeat in Birmingham and Brixton. Imperialist occupation of Ireland is linked to the continuation of capitalist rule in Britain. That is the root of Britain's intransigent occupation of Ireland and of the difficulty of fighting for Irish freedom in this country. Support a struggle thousands of miles away, yes; but support a struggle which threatens the very existence of the ruling class here, and watch out! The smell of blood dissipates over a distance.

Any campaign for Irish freedom in Britain must therefore be willing and able to challenge the British state. The problem with much 'solidarity' at the moment is that it only seeks to *pressurise* it. You cannot reason British imperialism round into charitably giving Ireland its freedom, any more than

you can talk the apartheid regime into quietly dismantling the system which guarantees the super-exploitation of millions.

The relationship between British imperialism and Ireland explains the difficulty of winning workers in Britain to take sides with the Irish people and the IRA against the British state and its army. It is also the strongest argument as to why workers here *should* take sides – for the IRA, against the British army. Ireland underpins our own exploitation.

Any time workers in Britain take up the fight for their own rights – whether they be trade union, abortion, racial or whatever – they find themselves up against the same state that Irish nationalists face in Belfast and Derry.

This has been most strikingly illustrated by the miners' Great Strike and the inner city riots in the early 80s, which brought workers in Britain face to face with the forces of the state, kitted out in the same fashion that Irish people in the Six Counties face every day. There are sure to be more examples as more people in Britain take up the fight for their rights. Look at the way the police are dealing with anti-poll tax demonstrators. A nation that oppresses another can never itself be free.

Nobody argued Nelson Mandela's 'innocence' to justify the campaign to release him. Absolutely right: he was 'guilty' of fighting for his people's freedom. The same is true of the Volunteers of the IRA and Inla incarcerated in British and Twenty-six County jails. There is no such thing as a 'guilty' political prisoner; free them *all*, in Ireland and South Africa.

The Hands Off Ireland! campaign fights for the freedom of all Irish political prisoners. It also fights for the freedom of Ireland: for troops out *now*. This is a fight which must be taken up by the masses of workers in Britain, in the interests of the Irish people and in our own interests. On April 21 in London, HOI! is organising a march for troops out, commemorating the Easter Rising of 1916 in Dublin, when the Irish Volunteers and Citizen Army rose up against British rule.

That fight posed the question point blank to workers in Britain – which side are you on? We aim to hammer this home today, and to win workers here to line up alongside their natural allies, those in Ireland fighting for national liberation.

Support freedom in South Africa – support freedom in Ireland! Imperialism is the same enemy. Join the resistance on April 21. Take the streets for Irish liberation!

- Troops Out Now!
- Make Ireland Thatcher's Vietnam!

Alan Merrik

Take the streets for Irish liberation! March for troops out now! Saturday April 21, 1pm, Islington Town Hall, Upper Street N1

Unemployed ORGANISER

Paper of the Unemployed Workers Charter, Issue No7

AXE THE TAX!

March against the Poll Tax: Saturday June 9, 1990

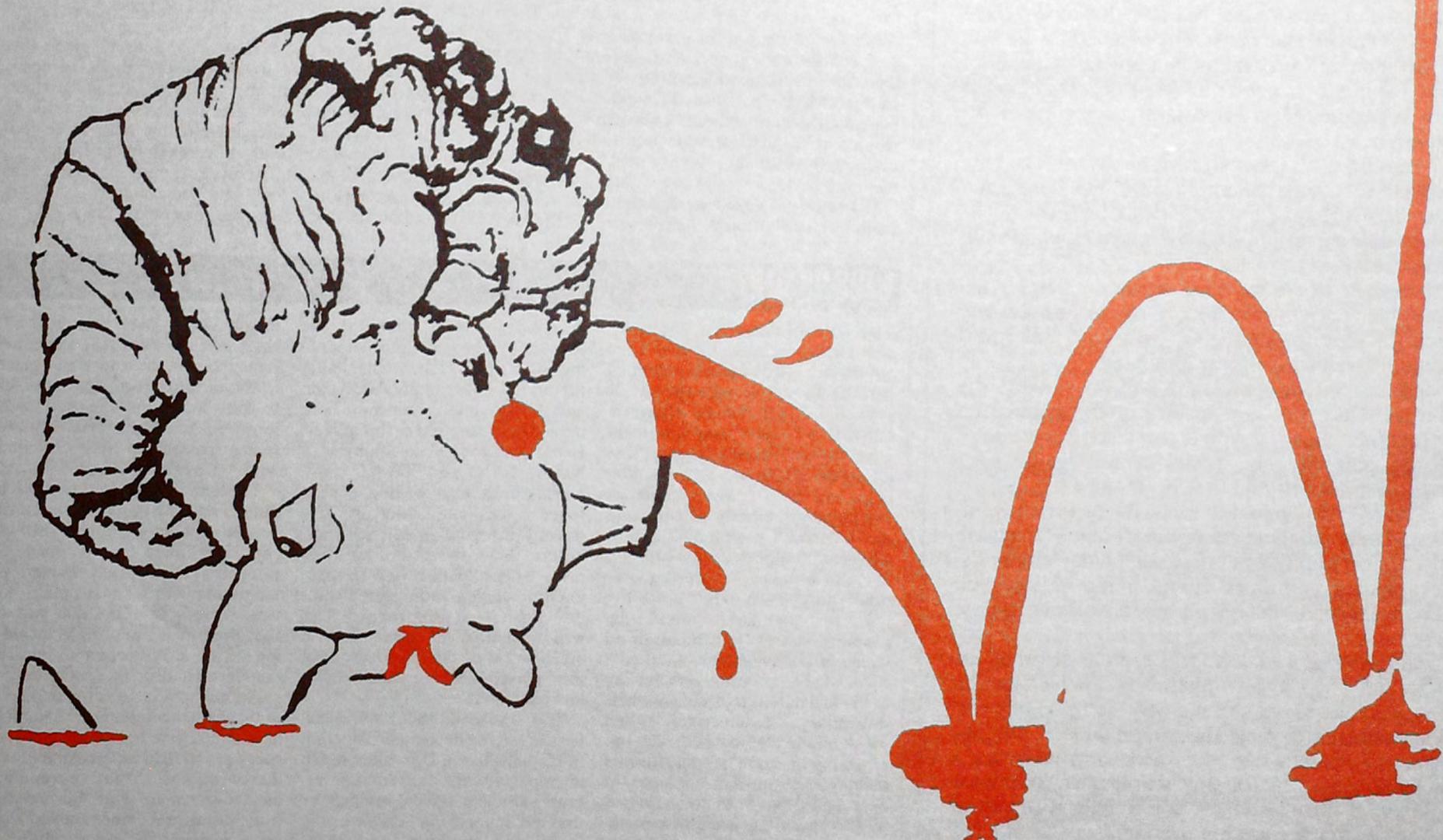
Assemble 12.30pm St. Matthews, Brixton Hill, SW2

(opposite Lambeth Town Hall. Tube: Brixton)

Don't pay!

Public Meeting:
7.30pm, Wednesday April 25
Room 2, St. Matthews,
Brixton Hill, SW2
(opp. Lambeth Town Hall)
(tube: Brixton)

Don't collect!



FOR MORE INFORMATION WRITE TO UWC, BCM BOX 928, LONDON WC1N 3XX or ring 01-431 3135

UWC

UNEMPLOYED WORKERS CHARTER

BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Tel: 01-431 3135

Fight Back Together

The demonstration on Saturday March 31, 1990 against the poll tax will provide an excellent opportunity for employed and unemployed workers to express their anger against this sickening Tory scheme. No doubt this will be one of the biggest mass gatherings seen since the government took power and it will certainly provide living proof of the vast unpopularity that exists against it.

The UWC states, however, that the actions and demonstrations must not end here. We have always emphasised the importance of all workers, unemployed and employed, joining and fighting together against a common enemy: and we do not simply state this with regard to the poll tax.

UWC members and supporters will of course recognise our fight against unemployment and the threat that it brings. It concerns all workers and their families. Not only the millions who have had direct experience of it over the last ten years or so, but also those who have escaped it, yet have been constantly plagued by the fact that, at any moment, they might be flung onto the scrap heap. We explain how unemployment occurs and what it means to people. Most importantly, we organise to fight against it.

The Tories have, as is usual, continually attacked the unemployed for being unemployed. "Feckless" and "lazy" are labels they often use to describe those out of work. Any demonstrations against it are labelled militant and extreme.

But then they would say that, wouldn't they? Anything that challenges their system is seen as unnecessary and farcical: Action against a system which puts profit before human welfare is simply dismissed.

The demonstrations against the poll tax provide the same threat. Here we have masses of the population joining together, fighting with a common, basic aim – to beat the poll tax. The Tories cannot ignore such demonstrations, nor should they be allowed to!

We in the UWC applaud those at the March demonstration and support their fundamental aim – to smash the poll tax. We also will be there on the day emphasising the need for continued, joint action between all groups of employed and unemployed workers against it.

But what next? Do we look to a Labour government to fight for us? The UWC emphatically says NO!, as the adjacent article explains. That's why we're having our own demonstration against the tax on June 9. We believe that this system has to provide and maintain a decent living standard for any worker, employed or unemployed. But we also need you to fight with us and tell the Tories that we are not prepared to accept a cut in our living standards. So join the UWC and help us build the fightback. Tell the Tories what to do with their tax!

No answer with the Labour Party!



Labour won't point the way forward

Following the massive Mid-Staffordshire election victory of the Labour candidate, Sylvia Heal, on Thursday March 23, Kinnock's party now has its eyes firmly set on winning the next general election. Undoubtedly, many turned their backs on the Tories because of the poll tax. Yet although Labour vigorously condemns the tax, its leaders have done little to encourage any organised fightback against it.

Condemnations by the Tory government over militant demonstrations against the poll tax have been echoed by Kinnock. "Violence will not be tolerated in a democracy," he continually cries. According to the Labour leader, the only way to beat the poll tax is to vote for his party at the next general election, where Labour would, so he says, introduce a tax orientated more to property and income.

It was not so very long ago that many Labour councils were con-

templating not implementing the tax, but working under the authority and guidance of Kinnock they soon changed their minds. Any Labour individuals who have since refused to pay the tax have been publicly condemned and frowned upon. In fact, time after time, the Labour party has refused to recognise action which has the power to smash it.

By the autumn of last year, for example, upwards of half million people in Scotland still had not paid a penny of the tax. Indeed, many Labour councils there moved to threaten court action against them. Even today these councils are beginning to enforce court orders against those who haven't paid.

"Every action must remain within the law" Kinnock continually bleats out. "The poll tax will be defeated when we're elected to parliament" he reminds us. In the meantime, all of us would have to pay the tax, no matter how much it

will hit our standard of living.

Workers should have no illusions in the Labour Party. If it does win the next election it will only be because the bosses have found their interests safe in its hands. We must realise that Kinnock is out to manage the system, not fight it – just as all previous Labour governments have. Kinnock will not hesitate to implement measures which will attack our living standards, if it helps his precious capitalist system. This is an economic fact of life.

The truth is that today we live under a system that is rotten and crisis ridden. Kinnock's answer to the problem is a pale blue version of Thatcher's. Indeed, given that Labour is now firmly in the hands of the openly pro-capitalist right, why should Labour's recipe for an alternative to the poll tax be radically different from the Tories?

Kinnock cannot be trusted to look after our interests: only we have the power to do that.

UNIONS AND ET

The Employment Training scheme, introduced by the Tory government in September 1988, is halfway through its second year. In 1988 the Trade Union Congress debated a motion from the local government union Nalgo, seconded by GMB and supported by NUPE and TGWU, which was overwhelmingly carried, "instructing the General Council of TUC to withdraw support forthwith and institute a policy of non-cooperation" with this scheme.

However, within two months the general council had neutralised Congress policy and had adopted a classic fudge position of allowing individual unions to decide on their own policy – so much for 'united we stand, divided we fall'. The bureaucrats of the TUC had turned their backs on the unemployed once again! We were not surprised by this; when have union bureaucrats ever had the interests of the workers – employed and unemployed – foremost in their minds?

Nevertheless this has not

deterred us from going to the workers' movement and demanding solidarity and the implementation of the 1988 Congress decision; and many union branches have upheld and supported this policy. Even the general secretaries of Nalgo, NUPE and TGWU have been stirred into writing a joint letter to local authorities, who are directly involved in ET schemes, asking them to reconsider their involvement "with a view to making a principled and planned withdrawal from the programme". This was distributed in autumn 1989 in anticipation of the introduction of the 'actively seeking work' clause on October 9.

This clause in the 1989 Social Security Act "makes participation in schemes like ET an offer which unemployed people cannot refuse", and is a squalid attempt by the government to disguise the compulsory aspect of an 'offer' of ET. The letter points out that "Employment Service staff have been instructed that while 'failure'

to attend ET does not, in itself, show that the claimant's jobsearch is inadequate, the refusal of a place ... should encourage the counsellor to look closely at the claimant's jobsearch to ensure that they are taking reasonable steps to find work" (Circular 161/1, para 92).

To achieve the defeat of such clauses and the implementation of proper training at proper rates of pay, we need to conduct a campaign in workplaces where collaboration with ET takes place, to win workers to a position where they boycott ET and YTS, including taking strike action to ensure management drop these schemes.

Although our aim is the organisation of the unemployed, the unity of unemployed and employed is necessary to fight all harassment of the unemployed, thus preventing the government and businesses from using the unemployed to drive down wages and conditions. At the same time we must demand real jobs, and real training with real pay.

TECS

In the last issue of *Unemployed Organiser*, we pointed out the dangers of the TECS (Training and Enterprise Councils) which administer ET, YTS and other government cheap labour schemes. The 'privatisation' of training will give bosses total control over 'trainees' and would provide a sort of labour conscription whereby the unemployed would be dragged directly onto cheap labour schemes.

Already the TECS are experiencing problems, particularly in the South-east. The March edition of the management paper *Personnel Today* pointed out that "TECS will be unable to provide sufficient training to tackle skill shortages because of continued government controls over ET funds".

Not that they intended to do so in the first place, but this action by the Tories typifies their attitude and commitment to ET and the unemployed. We demand that all schemes be properly financed and adequate provision provided for training. The unemployed should not have to suffer for being unemployed!

WORKPLACE ACCIDENTS

A recent report by John Rimington, director general of the Health and Safety Executive, has pointed out that personnel managers must take more responsibility for cutting workplace accidents for people on ET and YTS. The report states that over the last year, deaths within full-time employment rose from 360 to 514, while more people have been injured on government training schemes.

This is all well and good, but the UWC has no illusions in Rimington's ability to radically reduce the accident rate. Bosses have little interest in providing adequate health and safety cover for full timers, let alone trainees. Maintaining and supervising such aspects of a workforce is expensive and cuts heavily into profit. Ultimately, they are in business not to look after their workforce, but to make money.

Without investing in adequate training, trainees risk their lives by operating dangerous machinery they know nothing about. The time is now long overdue when our health must be placed before profit.

HIGH TURNOVER

March's edition of *Personnel Today* also exposed the government's attempt to reduce the massive drop-out rates from ET. The report stated that "where 33% of trainees failed to reach the training agent, 47% dropped out between training agent and training manager", and that "20% stayed only a week". It went on to say that of those who actually "received training, 70% left before completing an action plan, and of those who stayed on, 42% did not get a job".

Employment secretary Michael Howard stated the drop-out rates were a "concern" (*sic*) and promised to consider what could be done to reduce the figures.

The UWC knows what should be done and we're not prepared to wait around for Michael Howard to consider a solution. All unemployed on training schemes should have proper trade union agreed rates of pay, adequate training,

and a guaranteed job at the end of a scheme. Only then will the unemployed be attracted to and remain on schemes.

UWC ACTION

Money has been flowing into UWC funds in response to the appeal in *UO* No6, with £100 from comrade PC, £50 from NC and a number of lesser sums donated. Nevertheless, the short period between issue No 6 and the early publication of the present issue, to be ready in time for the March 31 anti-poll tax demo, means that we have not yet collected the £500 necessary to pay for this issue, and have had to borrow again, despite new collections being undertaken by supporters in Devon and Prestwick, Scotland. However, this one, *UO* No7, is intended to run until the June 9 anti-poll tax march in Brixton, giving us time to cut into our overall debt, which is now just over £3,000. We must get rid of this debt if we are to put our organisation into fighting shape. We need more union affiliations, some substantial donations would help, but above all, to make the UWC self-reliant we need to double and treble the number of comrades raising regular money on street and workplace collections with the petition. *Can you help?*

Our Conway Hall public meeting (March 19) on the theme "Stop TUC collaboration with slave labour schemes!" in preparation for the lobby of the TUC general council on Wednesday March 28, was addressed by UWC honorary president, Ernie Roberts, who urged linking up existing unemployed organisations and stressed the importance of organising at grass roots level, in the localities. A sharp discussion ensued on how this could best be done, and it was agreed to work towards the establishment of a South London group.

The main practical step to emerge was our decision to organise an anti-poll tax demo in Brixton on June 9, and a public meeting on April 25 to draw supporters together to help mobilise for it. This will give UWC supporters, especially in South London, the opportunity to highlight the way the tax will attack the unemployed.

The lobby of the TUC general council on the March 28 went ahead in an organised, militant and disciplined manner, with banners, placards and megaphones putting across our message against ET and YTS. As we have always stated, if the TUC leaders aren't prepared to fight against cheap labour schemes, then they should make way for people who are. We certainly caught the attention of the TUC tops, with the Workers Theatre Movement performing Ewan MacColl's *Johnny Noble*, a story of unemployed struggles in the thirties, on the street outside Congress House. We showed that we are a force which is not going to disappear, and served notice of our mobilisation for the four day march from Manchester to lobby this year's Congress in Blackpool on Monday September 3.

Supporters will recall our letter to the TUC in *Unemployed Organiser* No6, offering a UWC speaker to address the general council. Surprise, surprise — they refused. "The T.U.C. does not support the establishment of a separate organisation for unemployed workers" replied Brendan Barber, Secretary of the Organisation Department. "It is not the practice of the General Council to receive delegations," he wrote. "The way to seek

to change Congress policy is to pursue the matter through affiliated unions and the Congress itself."

The UWC will get on with the job of building unemployed organisation, while putting pressure on the TUC from the outside, but our trade unionist supporters must take up the task of turning on the pressure from the inside. *No collaboration with slave labour schemes!*

Central London Meetings: Every Monday 8pm at the Diorama Arts Centre, 18 Park Square East, NW1 (tube: Regents Park or Great Port-

land Street)

Anti-poll tax actions:

Wed April 25: Public meeting in Brixton (see front cover)
Sat June 9: Demonstration in Brixton (see front cover)

UWC Petition against ET, YTS and the "actively seeking work" clause. Collect signatures and cash for the UWC. Send SAE for 6 petition sheets. UWC needs £500 per week!

Unemployed Organiser No7: Bulk prices including postage: 8 for £1; 100 plus at 10 for £1.

TEE SHIRTS



Raise cash for the UWC by wearing — and selling — the best anti-poll tax Tee Shirt on the market! £6 each, 5 for £25, 10 for £45 post free. Cheque with order please to UWC.

LETTER



No trust in the TUC

As a supporter of the UWC and the principle of unemployed workers organising themselves, I was most disappointed to read the open letter to the TUC in the number 6 issue of *Unemployed Organiser*.

In the first instance the letter is contradictory in so far as you ask the TUC to "...take on the task of organising the unemployed workers ...", but later declares, "... our aim" (UWC) "is to build a national unemployed workers movement ..." Are we therefore just a pressure group upon the TUC, or are we serious in our commitment to do the job ourselves? One cannot have it both ways — unless you seek to build the movement and then hand it over to the tender mercies of the TUC?

The concept of "demanding" the TUC takes action in the workers' interests has had catastrophic effects within the workers' movement: Remember the miners, the seafarers, the healthworkers and just recently the ambulance workers, all of whom appealed, demanded and depended upon the TUC to take action to support their struggle, with humiliating defeat and rejection as their answer. They appealed to the TUC at the expense of appealing to their fellow members to take action on their behalf — they, neither, could have it both ways.

As class conscious workers, surely it is our duty to learn from past experiences and to warn our fellow workers that the TUC will not assist them, (in fact, they will betray them), and so prevent workers in the future from needlessly wasting time and energy and suffering the demoralising effects of a defeat? Unless we do so, and present the alternative of building a mass rank and file movement, which cuts across trade union barriers so developing class united action, we ourselves thwart the struggle for better conditions and a socialist system of society.

In fact the letter points a direction and perspective which negates the class approach, and

consolidates the division of the workers. Not only do you suggest the TUC organises the unemployed but that they do so through a "union of their own alongside other unions". In other words, a narrow 'trade' type organisation, united with other 'trade' unions through the TUC bureaucracy, instead of being a constituent part of a broad, grass roots rank and file class organisation uniting employed and unemployed workers under their own militant leadership.

I would further suggest that both the Charter and the petition be revised to take on board the class perspective and the independence of the UWC in that we cease to refer to the TUC sympathetically and declare that: "In view of the failure and refusal of the TUC to undertake steps to organise the unemployed, we the undersigned support the efforts of the UWC to develop a national unemployed workers movement etc etc, and that we support the proposed demonstration at the TUC conference to both expose the TUC's anti-working class position, and to appeal to delegates to give us their support in struggle to advance our charter of demands etc, etc..."

P. Conlon

Stan Kelsey replies:

Comrade Conlon is quite right to emphasise the necessity for unemployed workers to organise themselves, and for a national unemployed workers movement to be both democratic and independent, if it is not to be a sham. This is not contradicted, however, by demanding help in this mammoth task from trade unionists and trade union organisations up to and including the TUC itself. The defeats to which comrade Conlon refers were fought on narrow sectional lines, and the building of a militant unemployed movement can make a major contribution to overcoming that sectionalism and winning the working class to fight as a class.

The UWC has no illusions in the

current TUC leadership, but we recognise that the achievement of a unified trade union movement with a single centre (in many countries the TU movement is divided along religious or political lines) is an enormous gain which, given the right leadership, could be a great benefit to the working class. By raising the demand that the TUC applies some of its considerable resources to building independent unemployed organisation, we are implicitly demanding a leadership willing to do this. In effect, we are saying: "If you, at the head of the trade union movement, will not fight for unemployed organisation, in the interests of all workers, then make way for those who will!"

At the same time, we get on with the job — because it is needed, and because in the course of 'getting on with the job' we are forging a new leadership.

The UWC stands for a fighting unity of employed and unemployed workers, and is not against unions but for them: we recognise that when workers join a "narrow" trade union this is an immense step forward as compared to being unorganised; and we favour the merging of trade unions — through democratic rank and file pressure, not bureaucratic empire building — into industrial unions, to help overcome petty trade rivalry between workers.

The UWC favours the organisation of militant workers in rank and file movements across the divides of union, trade or industry to overcome the sectionalism which plagues our class, but neither unions nor rank and file movements can substitute for the role of a working class political party. Unlike such a party, which plays a vanguard political role, the national unemployed workers movement which we need should be open to all unemployed workers, just as union membership is open to all workers within a given trade or industry, regardless of political affiliation.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

THE BATTLE AGAINST THE "NOT GENUINELY SEEKING WORK" CLAUSE (Part 2)



Joe's situation was typical of the way in which the new rule would operate when it was brought in. He had been out of work for three years, but each year he had managed to get enough stamps to qualify for benefit by doing casual work when it was available. Now, when the new rule came in he would automatically be disbarred. It would be a case of if the NGSW clause didn't get him, the thirty stamp rule would.

By the late 1920's hundreds of

thousands had lost their benefits through the clause, and it was estimated that a further 250,000 would be affected by the thirty stamp rule.

Glancing through the cafe window and seeing that the rain, far from abating, was actually getting worse, they both decided to call it a day and make their way back to their homes. Before doing so however, Joe handed over one of his precious notes to Billy, choosing the one from the building site, as

that had been scribbled in pencil so it would be easiest to alter. This would provide evidence for the Bolton lad so that he would be able to claim that he had travelled miles in search for a job.

On parting company, the pair vowed that they would go on a march to London that was being planned by the NUWM.

The decision to launch a National Hunger March to London was taken by the NUWM in 1928. It was to be a similar endeavour to

the national march of 1922 - the last occasion that such a mammoth task had been undertaken. There had been a march from South Wales to London in 1927, and regional marches, similar to one in Scotland, when the unemployed had marched from Glasgow, Ayrshire and Lanarkshire and on the eastern side from Dundee and Fife to Edinburgh.

It had been a long time since a march on this scale had been contemplated and it would take a lot of hard work in order to launch it successfully.

The main idea would be not merely to march to the capital, which would in itself have been an empty gesture, but to campaign all the way along the routes, bringing home to the nation the plight of the unemployed and the evil of the further suffering deliberately caused by the NGSW clause and the equally obnoxious thirty stamp rule.

Men were to be mobilised from all the worst affected areas to form contingents that would set off on staggered dates because of the varying distances to be covered. This would enable all of the marches to arrive in London on the same day.

Thousands of the Glasgow working class assembled on January 23

in Blytheswood Square to cheer the first contingent, the Scots, on its way. Led by a pipe band, the 200 men set off on their 500 mile journey. These men were to face snow storms, even full blizzards, sleet, wind, rain and fog before they reached London on February 24.

The next contingent to set off were the men of the north east, who were on their way by the end of the month. Contingents from Liverpool, Plymouth and Yorkshire started off simultaneously on February 8, followed a few days later by the men from South Wales and Manchester. Marchers from Staffs and the Midlands, Notts and Derbyshire joining brought the number of men now on the road to well over a thousand. Over a thousand shock troops of an army of unemployed men who, by taking part in this protest, had recovered their pride. They marched like soldiers, heads held high, proud with the knowledge that they were fighting back, and proud with the knowledge that they were fighting for a better life for their families, instead of submitting to a life of enforced deprivation.

Eric Blair

(to be continued)

JOIN UP!

I wish to join the UWC. Enclosed:

£2 (unwaged)
£5 (waged)

My organisation wishes to affiliate to the UWC.

I enclose £25 (local organisation)
£100 (national organisation)

I/My organisation wish/es to sponsor the UWC's September 1990 march
and lobby of the TUC

We enclose a donation of £

Please send copies of UO No7. I enclose £
 (£1 for 8, £10 for 100, including postage)

Please send copies of the next UO
and invoice me

Name _____

Address _____

Tel _____ Organisation _____

BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Tel: 01-431 3135

The Unemployed Workers Charter says:

- Work at trade union rates or full maintenance for the unemployed at the average level of pay
- Smash ET and YTS - for real training at trade union rates
- Stop harassment of the unemployed. Claiming benefit is a right, not a crime. Smash the "actively seeking work" clause
- End all unnecessary overtime work with no loss of pay. For a 35 hour week
- Unemployed workers' groups should have representation on trades councils and the TUC. A national unemployed workers' movement is needed to be the voice of the unemployed
- Build a fighting unity between employed and unemployed workers